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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARIA CANTWELL, a Senator from the State of Washington.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the fountain of every blessing, provide our Senators this day reverence to realize Your presence, humility to know their own needs, and trust to ask You for help. Give them also the courage to obey Your precepts and to live for Your glory.

Lord, walk with them as they work, giving them the wisdom to believe that there is no purity without vigilance, no learning without study, and no crown without a cross. Strengthen their resolve to choose the right and shun the wrong.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 2, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARIA CANTWELL, a Senator from the State of Washington, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. CANTWELL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4350, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4350) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reed-Inhofe modified amendment No. 3867, in the nature of a substitute.

Reed amendment No. 4775 (to amendment No. 3867), to modify effective dates relating to the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration and the Service Acquisition Executive of the Department of the Air Force for Space Systems and Programs.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I begin this morning with some good news. I am happy to say that last night I reached an agreement with Leader

MCCONNELL, the Speaker, and the chairs of the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee on a continuing resolution that will keep the Federal Government funded through mid-February of next year.

This is a good compromise that allows an appropriate amount of time for both parties in both Chambers to finish negotiations on appropriations. As I said, this is a good compromise that allows an appropriate amount of time for both parties in both Chambers to finish negotiations on appropriations.

This morning, the House will start the process to take up this government funding measure, and we hope they can have it passed through their Chamber by the end of today.

Unfortunately, it seems Republican dysfunction could be a roadblock to averting an unnecessary and dangerous government shutdown. Democrats and most Republicans, including the Republican leader, have said they don't want to see a Republican shutdown. We hope cooler heads will prevail.

Just as we saw with the NDAA, a few individual Republican Senators appear determined to derail this important legislation because of their opposition to the President's lifesaving vaccine guidelines critical to healing our country in the middle of a pandemic.

Let's be clear: If there is a shutdown, it will be a Republican anti-vaccine shutdown. Democrats want to get the government funded as soon as possible. It was not easy to reach this deal. It took a while to get Republican leadership on board. But I am glad that we have gotten it done. I thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle for working with us to find a path forward.

Now all that is left are a few lone holdouts who are raising objections that are doomed to fail and which can be debated elsewhere. There is no reason we should have a Republican shutdown. I have worked with the Republican leader on an agreement that will

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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avoid one. Now, again, I hope cooler heads will prevail on the other side so we can keep the government funded before tomorrow's deadline.

H.R. 4350

Now, Madam President, on the NDAA, once again, Republican dysfunction—that seems to be what is going on in the other Chamber, not by all Republican Members but by some who seem to run the show—the Republican show, that is. Republican dysfunction has, sadly, caused immense damage on another routine, important, and largely bipartisan priority, the NDAA.

Democrats have been working in good faith with the other side for weeks—since before the Thanksgiving holiday—to secure an agreement to approve our annual Defense bill. Last night, because of the objections of one Republican, the NDAA has, once again, been prevented from moving forward.

As I said last night, the amendment pushed by my colleague would certainly raise a blue slip objection in the House and, thus, kill the entire NDAA. Now, the Senator from Florida says there are no blue slip issues, but this isn't a matter of opinion. The authority here rests with the Ways and Means Committee in the House, and they have stated, unequivocally, that his proposal would raise blue slip issues. There is no objection to the substance of the amendment presented by the senior Senator from Florida, but it simply would violate the provision in our Constitution that requires revenue measures to originate in the House. Other Members had amendments with similar issues, but they worked with the Ways and Means Committee in the House to resolve them because they are the arbiter. Senator RUBIO has not done the same.

It is unfortunate that this misguided demand of a single Republican Senator is preventing this important legislation to support our national security from moving in the Senate, particularly in light of the fact that so many amendments were allowed to be offered by Senator REED and Senator INHOFE. The number of amendments that would be voted on—let me repeat—would exceed the total number of amendments—the total number of amendments—that were allowed on the NDAA under the 4 years of Republican leadership during Donald Trump's Presidency.

So to say that we are in a process that is unbalanced or unfair is totally false. It is just, simply, one person holding it up. For the sake of our troops and our families, I hope this Republican dysfunction can be addressed.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3299

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3299) to prohibit the Department of Defense from discharging or withholding pay or benefits from members of the National Guard based on COVID-19 vaccination status.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022—Continued

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, two-thirds of Americans are worried about inflation. About half of the middle class and 70 percent of low-income families just told Gallup that rising prices have been a personal hardship for their households. That is why 67 percent of the American people say that Washington needs to “cut back on spending and printing money,” but here in Washington, Democrats are bound and determined to do just the opposite. They want to try the crazy strategy of inflating their way out of inflation—another massive, reckless taxing-and-spending spree.

Even the most generous estimates, when the CBO has to swallow all—all—of the Democrats' accounting gimmicks at face value, still say their proposal would entail \$800 billion in new deficit spending over the next 5 years alone—over just 5 years. Outside experts who are allowed to reject the Democrats' obvious budget gimmicks find the real cost—the real cost—of their bill would actually be close to \$5 trillion. That is with a “t”—trillion dollars. After a decade, it would increase deficits by \$2.8 trillion, but the reckless pricetag, actually, isn't the only problem.

What is remarkable is that the Democrats want to spend all these trillions but not leave citizens with any impressive, enduring national project in return. There is no Hoover Dam, Interstate Highway System, or Moon landing on the other side of their mountains of borrowed money—nothing like that. It is just a giant catalog of socialist mediocrity: new entitlements here, new transfer programs there, new ways to let bureaucrats run

families' lives, and shameless—shameless—goodies for specific interest groups that support the political left—a giant, muddled mess that would leave families with fewer childcare choices and higher costs, with fewer new prescription drugs and cures, with higher prices for less reliable energy. It is, literally, a reckless taxing-and-spending spree that hurts American families and actually—believe it or not—helps China.

There are a lot of big, sweeping, radical changes in their proposal that would change families' lives dramatically and entirely for the worse. But in between the sweeping wish-fulfillment for people who call themselves “democratic socialists,” there is also a remarkable amount of just pure waste, absurd—literally absurd—little giveaways, and interest group goodies. A billion here, a billion there, and hope the American people won't notice if it is buried in enough bureaucratic gibberish.

Here are just a few examples.

This bill would supply billions of dollars to help colleges and universities indoctrinate college students with even more leftwing propaganda and billions more to give them made-up Potemkin jobs in a make-work program they are calling a Civilian Climate Corps—this at a time when industries already cannot find workers.

Their bill would set aside multiple billions of dollars to put Federal Government employees, like IRS agents and postal carriers, into brandnew electric vehicles.

Earlier this year, the Biden administration made sure that luxury Teslas, with a sticker price up to \$97,000, were on the list for government procurement—\$97,000 per vehicle.

So working families might be having to choose between heating costs and new shoes for the kids. Oh, but don't worry, Democrats will make sure IRS auditors can cruise around in Silicon Valley's finest.

Their proposal would create a huge \$29 billion slush fund that activists are applauding as the foundation for something called—now, listen to this—a national green bank. Can you say Solyndra on steroids? An entire bank to finance pipe dreams that can't earn support out in the real economy.

Separately, they are planning to spend multiple billions of taxpayer dollars for something the liberals are calling—listen to this one now—tree equity. I will let that one speak for itself.

Of course, the Green New Deal folks aren't the only constituency Democrats want to pay off. This reckless taxing-and-spending spree is also designed to knock out all their Christmas shopping for trial lawyers, Big Labor bosses, Ivy League administrators, and blue-State millionaires, all in one fell swoop.

There is the State and local tax carve-out, the SALT gimmick, that would give an extra tax cut to two-thirds of the households making a million dollars or more a year. Perhaps to